Woodward, 1697.

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Mr. *Woodward's* SERMON

Preach'd before the

LORD MAYOR

At *Guildhall* Chappel, *August* 1, 1697.

Clarke Mayor.

Jovis xxiii *die Septembris*, 1697. *Annoque Regni Regis* WILLIELMI *Tertii Angliæ, &c. Nono.*

THIS Court doth desire Mr. *Woodward* to print his Sermon preached at the *Guildhall*-Chappel, on Sunday the First Day of *August* last, before the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of this City.

Goodfellow.

Sodom's *Vices destructive to other Cities and States.*

A

SERMON

Preached before the Right Honourable

The Lord Mayor

OF THE

CITY of *LONDON*,

At the Chappel of *GUILD-HALL*,

On Sunday *August* 1. 1697.

By JOSIAH WOODWARD, Minister of *Popler.*

LONDON;

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To the Right Honourable

Sir *EDWARD CLARKE*, Lord Mayor of the City of *London*.

My Lord,

SInce it has pleaſed your Lordſhip to introduce the following Sermon into further Light; I crave leave to proſecute the Subject of it ſo far as to intimate, that ſince the Idleneſs which the Text condemns is uſually the Parent, or at leaſt the Nurſe of the other Vices therein mention'd; it ſeems very natural to conclude, that a general Engagement of the many idle Hands among us in ſutable Employments, would be a moſt direct means to ſuppreſs our other peſtilent Enormities. We could ſcarcely be imagined liable to be over-run with Sodom's Pride, Luxury, and Uncleanneſs, if we did not give way to Sodom's Idleneſs.

The ſetting up of Publick Work-Houſes for the Encouragement of the Diligent, the Relief of the Poor, the Employment of the Idle, and the Correction of the Criminal, is a Noble and Excellent Deſign, which has been long in the Thoughts and Wiſhes of many Great Men and Brave Spirits amongſt us. And it is hoped, that it may now be ſeaſonably and ſucceſsfully propoſed to that Auguſt Aſſembly which ſuperintends the grand Intereſts of this Nation.

For, a greater National Good can hardly be imagined than this would ſoon appear to be; it being un-

doubtedly a much greater Charity *to any poor Person that is able to labour, to supply him with* constant Work *to get his Living, than to afford him a constant Maintenance in* Idleness: *for as much as* Idleness *would naturally nourish many Diseases in his Body, and Vices in his Soul, which an habitual Employment would be apt to prevent.*

And in this Opinion, *my Lord, (if I may not call it a* Demonstration) *I am supported by that* Great Philosopher *of ours, the* Lord Verulam; *who advised* that all Houses of Charity should be Houses of convenient Employment and Industry: *which would at once enlarge the extent of the Charity, and make it of greater Benefit to the Partakers of it; besides those great Advantages which would accrue to the* Publick *by a general Employment of all Hands, in the increase of our* Manufacture, Trade, *and* Navigation: *which are none of the least Interests of this* famous Island.

See his Letter to K. James I. Hern's Dom. Carthus.

And now, since the Advantages of a general Employment *are so very great, and so evident to every considering Person; it is very strange that in such a trading, wealthy, and populous* City *as this, which is honoured by the Residence and Government of so many* Wise *and* Industrious Persons, *there is not yet any effectual Provision made to set and keep those* Idle People *to work, who now perplex the* Business *of the more Diligent, disturb their* Quiet, *pilfer their* Goods, *and who are in truth the Sin and Shame, the Burden and Annoyance of this* Opulent *and* Magnificent City.

And

And ſince the Sequel of my Diſcourſe leads me to it, I crave your Lordſhip's leave to ſuggeſt further; that it is (I humbly conceive) a fundamental Error *(which the Induſtry of a* Neighbouring Country *may teach us to correct) that we inure not our* Youth *to diligent and conſtant Labour, by which they would be brought to account* Idleneſs *a Torment in their adult Age. And by this Expedient our Commonalty would be brought to better Behaviour in time of* Peace; *and be rendered more obedient to Orders, and more able to endure Toils and Fatigues in time of* War.

For, the Nature of Men *is in this reſpect very like that of* Waters; *the pureſt of them gather Filth by ſtanding ſtill: and therefore that coarſe and droſſy part of Mankind which never had any Refinement by* Learning, Education, *or* Religion, *will be apt to degenerate into the very Dregs of corrupt Manners, if their peccant Humours be not carried off by wholeſom* Labour *and* Exerciſe. *Theſe Hands, My Lord, muſt be kept cloſe to commendable Employments, or they will tear and undermine the* State *that breeds them.*

And therefore, it is the Hope and Expectation of all good People, that ſince our Renowned Soveraign *has (by the great Bleſſing of God) reduced our* Foreign Enemies *to Reaſon, He will now apply the* Thoughtfulneſs *of his* Royal Mind *to correct our* Domeſtick Enormities *and* Impieties; *which will otherwiſe moſt certainly deſtroy our* Peace *and* Hope, *our* Proſperity *and* Renown, *and will (in a word) be the Bane of all our* Intereſts *and* Bleſſings. Now,

Now, since we have been often told, that the Calm of Peace is the only proper Scene of such a Reformation, *the good God grant that we may make a due Improvement of the* present Opportunity, *and that we abuse it not after that ingrateful sort that we have many others.*

In these Noble and Divine Enterprizes *would the* Great Soul *of our* Dread Soveraign *be shewn in its matchless* Glory; *when his* Royal Breast *shall appear to glow with a Zeal for the* good Manners *of his People, sutable to that* Martial Prowess *whereby he has asserted their* Liberties *and* Rights. *Then will He shine with a brightness of* Majesty *that will be conspicuous to all Mankind; beloved of the* Good, *dreaded by the* Evil, *admired and honoured of* All.

And finally, then shall we indeed render a meet Thank-Offering *to the God of our Mercies, who has by an extraordinary Hand of* Providence *supported us these many Years; who has marvelously succoured aud delivered us in the most extreme* Dangers; *and in fine, who has mercifully setled us (as we now hope) on the Basis of a* good and honourable Peace; *which, that God would vouchsafe to sanctify to us, that it may in Mercy be continued with us, is the earnest Prayer of,*

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Very respectful Humble Servant,

JOSIAH WOODWARD.

Ezek. XVI. 49.

Behold, This was the Iniquity of thy Sister Sodom; *Pride, fulneſs of Bread, and abundance of Idleneſs was in her, and in her Daughters; neither did ſhe ſtrengthen the hand of the Poor and Needy.*

THE Miſſion of *Ezekiel* into the *Prophetick Office* was very extraordinary, (as we find it deſcribed in the beginning of his *Prophecy*) and truly he was raiſed up in a very extraordinary Juncture; even when the Sins of the *Jews* were ripe, and their Deſtruction at the door. Ezek. 1. *per totum.* Ezek. 2. 1. Ver. 6.

God had already pour'd out ſome Vials of his Wrath upon that degenerate Nation: for now they became a Prey to their Adverſaries on every ſide, to whom they were formerly a Terror. They were inſulted by the *Bands of the Syrians, the Moabites, and the Ammonites*, as we read, 2 *King.* 24. 2. for 'tis there expreſly ſaid, that *God ſent theſe Armies againſt them, to deſtroy them.* Beſides this, the King of *Egypt* miſerably haraſs'd them, and brought them under ſevere Tributes. And now at the laſt, the King of *Babylon* had invaded them, and beſieged their *Capital City*; and entering it by Surrender, he had driven away their King *Jehojachin*, and great numbers of the People Captive to *Babylon*: And having made *Zedechiah* his Vice-Roy, he committed the Government of *Judea* to him, till he forfeited it by his Rebellion, which was nine years after. And then indeed the Forces of *Babylon* returned in fury, and laid both *Jeruſa-* 2 King. 23. 35. 2 King. 24. 11. Ver. 17. Ver. 20. 2 Chron. 36. 19.

lem and the *Temple* in Ruins, and fill'd all places with Slaughter and Deſolation.

Ezek. 1. 2. Now, it was in the time of this Reſpite, betwixt the firſt and ſecond Invaſion made upon them by the *Chaldeans*, that God was pleaſed to inſpire the Prophet *Ezekiel* Ver. 1. (one of the *Jewiſh Captives* at *Babylon*) to rebuke this backſliding People, who were not at all amended by their many Afflictions. And this was the laſt Prophet who pleaded with them in the Name of God, before their total Subverſion in *Church and State.*

How gracious and long-ſuffering is Almighty God! who tries the greateſt of Sinners in methods of Love and Mercy; and follows even thoſe with Calls to Repentance, who are advanced to the Brink of Ruin. When he had here brought great Miſery upon the whole Land of *Judea*; and ſuffered their Enemies to prevail in a great meaſure over them: He then ſtops the Torrent of his Wrath, and they muſt have a Reprieve for nine Years, before their final Overthrow, to *conſider the Things which belong to their Peace.*

Thus we often ſee a prudent and tender Parent, who having given ſome blows of Correction to a froward and undutiful Child, then ſtops his hand in which he holds the Rod; and expoſtulates and reaſons the Caſe, to ſee whether there be any relenting diſpoſition in the Child to prevent further Blows.

But alas! Such a fatal hardneſs and *fatneſs of Heart* had ſeized this profligate People, that none of theſe things moved them. They reformed not one of thoſe Enormities which the Prophet aſſured them would be the Cauſes of their Ruin: tho' they could not but ſee that they were the very ſame which had been the Deſtruction of *Sodom* before, as the Prophet tells them to their Faces in the words but now recited in your Ears. *Behold, this was the Iniquity of thy Siſter* Sodom; *Pride, fulneſs of Bread,*

Bread, and abundance of Idleneſs was in her, and in her Daughters; neither did ſhe ſtrengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

In which Words, the Prophet endeavours to impreſs this *Obſervation* upon them, which I beſeech God to fix deeply upon every Soul here preſent, namely,

That a City or Nation is then in very great Danger, when it abounds with thoſe Sins for which other Cities and Nations have been deſtroyed.

The ſame Way leads directly to the ſame End: And the ſame Sins lead as ſurely to the ſame Miſeries. *God is a Righteous Judg*, and will deal impartially with all People according to their Sins, for he is no Reſpecter of Perſons. He has done Juſtice already to the *Jews*, and he will not do otherwiſe to the *Gentiles*.

So that the Spirit of God here, takes one of the moſt awakening methods in the World to rouze up the *Jews* from their torpid Slumbers. He points at the very Cauſes of their growing Miſeries, and preſſes them to apply themſelves to the ſpeedieſt methods of Redreſs.

" Behold (ſays he) the very Symptoms of Deſtruction, " which appear'd in the Cities of *Sodom*, are dreadfully " apparent in thy Cities, even thine. Does it not fill thee " with horrour to behold the very ſame Plague-ſpots up- " on thee that were on thoſe Places which God deſtroyed " by fire from Heaven? Thou art the very Siſter of " *Proud*, *Idle*, *Unclean*, and *Unmerciful Sodom:* a Siſter " to her in Vice and Impudence; and art drawing on " to as certain and as ſore a Deſtruction. O *Jeruſalem*, " I am ſent from thy God to thee, to adviſe thee of this, " and to charge thee to conſider thy languiſhing State, " and to prevent thy Ruin. But *whether thou wilt hear*, " *or whether thou wilt forbear*, I will ſpread both thy Sin " and thy Danger before thine Eyes. Behold, thou " art become a *ſecond Sodom:* and thoſe very Sins which

" abound in thee, were thoſe which deſtroyed her.
" They were haughty, and luxurious, and unmerciful,
" as ye are this day; and *God took them away, as he ſaw*
" *good.*

The *Overthrow of Sodom* was a proverbial ſpeech for a ſudden and terrible Deſtruction, and is ſo uſed both in the Old and New Teſtament. We find, that God threatned
Jer. 50. 40. to deſtroy *Babylon*, as *he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbouring Cities thereof:* which another Pro-
Hoſ. 11. 8. phet tells us were *Admah and Zeboim.* And the Apoſtle *Jude* minds us, that the Deſolation of thoſe Cities is ſet forth by God's appointment, as a terrible Example to all after Ages: That all *Cities* and *Nations* may conſider in what Danger they ſtand, when once they come into any affinity to their Sins. And therefore it will nearly concern us at this time (when all, but ſuch as never think, are convinc'd, that both our Sins and Dangers are tremendous) to conſider whether the Vices amongſt us are not ſuch as led both *Sodom* and *Judea* to their Ruin. For which purpoſe, I now come to lay them in order before you, as they are repreſented in the Text: And I recommend this important matter to your ſpecial Conſideration, (particularly to ſuch as are more peculiarly obliged to conſult the Intereſts of this *Great City*) as in the Preſence of Almighty God.

I. The firſt Sin mentioned in the Text, as a Cauſe of the Deſtruction of *Cities* and *Nations*, is that of *Pride.* Which conſiſts in an overweaning Conceit of one's ſelf, or of ſomething belonging to us, to that degree, that our Heart is vainly lifted up thereby. And being ſo, the Man grows inſolent in moſt things which he either thinks, ſpeaks, or does. He has a ſcornful Eye, an imperious way of ſpeaking, and a contemptuous Carriage towards all Men. Yea, the proud Man carries it ſtifly to-

towards God himſelf; and almoſt forgets his dependence upon him, and that he was formed out of the Duſt of the Earth. It is a Vice that is never barren, but is continually bringing forth other Enormities by ſholes. It produces a contempt of Sacred things, and an inſolent reſentment of God's Providences, both of Bounty and Correction. In any Affliction he frets and is peeviſh: for his Pride will not allow him to think that he deſerves any Rebuke or Correction; but he is rather perſwaded, that the greateſt Mercies of God are due to his Merit. And this makes him grudg at the Enjoyments and Promotions of others, as if the whole World were made for him alone, and every Gift of God to others were a Robbery committed upon him. And for the ſame Reaſon he is impatient of Reproof, and very apt to ſcoff, eſpecially at ſuch as even in deſpight of his Pride he muſt needs perceive to be better than himſelf. He carries it with a domineering Severity towards his Inferiours; ſo that (like his Brother *Nabal*) there's ſcarcely *any one that dares to ſpeak to him*; and the leaſt Affront (tho undeſign'd) moves him to revenge it even with Blood. As for Superiours, he ſcarcely thinks he has any: but like a true *Son of Belial*, he is *without Yoke*, and is not to be brought under due Government; being ever apt to mutiny, and to breed diſorder: Not only ſaying with *Nabal*, *Who is David?* but with *Pharaoh*, *Who is the Lord, that I ſhould ſerve him?*

It is one chief Study of proud People, to endeavour to bring others to admire them as much as they do themſelves. And to this end (when better accompliſhments fail) they affect to plume themſelves with the richeſt Ornaments they can purchaſe or invent. And here, alas! *Pride* will ſo overdo the buſineſs, that it cannot but move Contempt in every ſenſible Perſon to behold with what ridiculous Forms and Modes they attempt to ſet forth themſelves. They fancy a ſort of Comelineſs in Deformity,

and

and that it adds a beauty to the Face to repreſent it under diſeaſes and blemiſhes, tho God has given them an unſpotted ſoundneſs.

God has not given to the Children of Men a party-colour'd Skin like the motly Brutes: nor has he markt them as he does many venomous Creatures and peſtilential Diſeaſes, with dark Spots: and yet how unſeemly ſoever this appears to all impartial and vertuous Minds, (whom Cuſtom and vain Notions have not blinded) it is hidden from their own eyes.

Now this Vice of *Pride* manifeſtly tends to Deſtruction ſeveral ways.

Firſt, In that it produces a multitude of other Sins, as its natural Off-ſpring and Effect: as you have already heard.

And *Secondly*, As it hardens the Heart under all the Guilt it brings upon it. For it always runs in the direct Diameter to Repentance. Proud Perſons are great Admirers of what themſelves do, and are hardly brought to acknowledg that they have done amiſs. But, like *Saul*, they avow *that they have done the Will of the Lord*, tho every Beaſt in his Herd had a Mouth to refute it.

And *Thirdly*, Pride leads to Ruin, as it is a Sin which leavens the very Prayers of Men, and renders all their religious Performances unſavoury in the Noſtrils of God. Luk. 18. 11. The *Phariſee* mentioned by our Saviour, was rather pufft up than humbled in his very Prayer, and ſo was rather *condemned* by it than *juſtified* in the ſight of God. For, Prov. 6. 17. Pride is a *thing which God hates*. Yea, which he will Iſa. 2. 11. *glorify himſelf in debaſing*. And therefore he will ſurely ſet himſelf to it, and go through with it. And upon all theſe accounts, the proud Perſon is ſo expoſed to the Wrath of God; that the *inſpired Wiſeman* has recorded it as a Prov. 16. 18. certain Mark of Deſtruction, *Pride goeth before Deſtruction, and a haughty Spirit before a fall*. And indeed it cannot

not be otherwiſe, ſince the proud Perſon renounces his Truſt in God, to place it in himſelf; which is to remove his Building from a *Rock*, to found it on the *Sand*.

And ſo I paſs on to conſider the *ſecond Vice*, which is repreſented in the Text as of a like deſtructive Nature; which is,

II. *Fulneſs of Bread.* This Expreſſion denotes that *Luxury and Exceſs* which is uſually produced by great Plenty when it falls into ill Hands. The *Sodomites*, it ſeems, made a very ill uſe of their plentiful Land, which is deſcribed, *Gen.* 13. 10. to be ſo beautifully ſituated, and ſo plentifully ſtored, that *it was even as the Garden of the Lord. A ſecond Eden*, for plenty of pleaſant Fruits, and other commodious Product. But theſe, alas! ſerved their Beſtial Luſts, and nurſed them to a very monſtrous Growth: till at laſt their Incontinence tranſgreſs'd the very Laws of Nature, and became very *crying* in the Ears of God.

Now, this brutal feeding of our Bodies, or as the *Apoſtle* calls it, *feaſting our ſelves without Fear*, is contrary to the very Nature of our Chriſtian Warfare. For it adminiſters indecent Flames to the ſenſitive Appetite, and at the ſame time dulls the accuracy of Reaſon, and lays the Conſcience aſleep. And we may eaſily gueſs what the End of that Perſon will be, who lies open to his Enemies, and binds the hands of his Friends. But the prudent Chriſtian does otherwiſe: and ſays with St. *Paul* (tho he was ſufficiently macerated by his continual Labours and Afflictions) *I keep under my Body, and bring it into ſubjection, leſt by any means, when I have preacht to others, I my ſelf ſhould be a Caſt-away*, 1 Cor. 9. 27.

He that would be a ſolid and ſerious *Chriſtian*, yea that would but be a grave and decent *Moraliſt*, muſt obſerve due Moderation in Meats and Drinks, and all corporal

poral Pleaſures: Yea, he muſt accuſtom his Appetite to ſubmit to the ſelf-denying Rules of *Abſtinence and Mortification* in their Seaſon; and by theſe and other Divine Expedients he muſt maintain a regular Government over the Concupiſcible Appetite. Which is a thing very agreeable to the Fleſh-denying Nature of our *Divine Religion*, and is both an Ornament and Help to the ſerious Practice of many parts of it. And therefore it is no wonder if the contrary tends to Ruin.

III. The next deſtructive Sin is that of *Idleneſs*: which, it ſeems, abounded greatly in *Sodom* before its Deſtruction. For it is ſaid, *Abundance of Idleneſs was in her, and in her Daughters*; or eſpecially amongſt their Women.

Idleneſs conſiſts either in doing Nothing, or Nothing of uſe, that a Perſon might and ought to have done in his Place and Capacity. Now, to be of ſuch a negligent, ſluggiſh, and torpid temper, is to contradict the very *End* and *Nature* of Life. To live without activity and livelineſs, is in a manner to live (if I may ſo ſpeak) without Life, like People aſleep or dead. And to all ingenious Minds, this is a moſt intolerable penance; it is contrary to the Nature of *brave and generous Spirits*, and therefore they ever treat the droniſh Sluggard with juſt Diſdain. And it is the *Apoſtle*'s Rule, that the Sluggard ſhould be ſtarved out of his idle way of Life, and *not be ſuffered to eat, till he applies himſelf to work.*

2 Theſſ. 3. 10.

Idleneſs is a Sin not only againſt God, but againſt one's *Generation*, yea againſt one's own *Health*, *Intereſts*, and *Poſterity*. There ought not to be any Perſon (Male or Female) idle in the World. For God never made any one for nothing, but to be of Uſe and Advantage to the Publick-Weal, according to his Station and Capacity.

This

This great Machine of the *Univerſe* has not one Wheel or Pin in it, tho never ſo ſmall, but what is of uſe in its place, and tends to compleat the whole. We behold all the works of Nature full of Action, and uſeful motion. The *Heavens* take their laborious Courſes, and *the Sun delighteth to run his* rapid perpetual *Race.* And every *Being* upon Earth, from the *Elephant* to the *Ant,* drudges and toils in things ſutable to its Nature. And ſome Active Minds of late can ſcarcely bear it that the *Earth* ſhould be accounted a *dead Weight*; and have framed a probable Scheme of its motion amongſt the reſt.

And ſhall *Man,* the moſt noble Creature, and the moſt capable of brave Productions of any under the Heavens, be the only uſeleſs and unactive part of the Creation? Has God given us a *Divine Soul* capable of ſuch Angelick Thoughts and Deſigns, and ſhall we apply our ſelves to nothing at all? or to nothing worthy of our Nature and Endowments?

It is not fit indeed that all Men ſhould be employ'd in manual Labour, or in the mechanick Occupations of human Life. Some Men appear in the World with ſuch a *noble Genius,* ſuch *refined Wiſdom, princely Courage,* and *vivacity* of Spirit, accompained with ſuch a *generous Concern* for the *Publick Good,* that they ſeem to be prepared and appointed of God to govern and defend the reſt; and to make improvments in thoſe Arts and Speculations which tend to the accommodation of *human Life* and the *publick Welfare*; and above all, to diſpoſe the converſations of Men in thoſe Divine paths of *Piety* and *Vertue* which tend to their everlaſting Bliſs. Theſe are Things which ennoble a Man, and render him *Honourable* and uſeful in his Generation, and make his Memory fragrant to future Ages.

But there are ſome on the other hand who are by natural incapacity rendered unfit for publick ſervice, or any other Poſt of Honour, as *Idiots* and *meer Naturals*; who are as Cyphers and Expletives in the Volume of the Creation. And truly this reflects with ſharpneſs upon ſuch as rank themſelves among theſe *noteleſs parts* of human Kind by an idle and uſeleſs Life. Of whom it can only be ſaid, when they are gone; *That ſuch a one breathed ſo many years in the World, and ſo died.* Alas! what a putid ſhame is it to thoſe whom God has every way fitted to do great and worthy Things in the *Church* and *State* in which they live, and has many ways called and excited them to it; that *they bury their rich Talents in the Dirt*: and the Ruſt of Idleneſs, or the Poiſon of Vice devours all thoſe Endowments whereby they might have done great things in their Generation.

Nor are they more *Honourable*, who employ their Parts and Labours about ſome uſeleſs and vain thing, (like *Domitian*'s induſtry in catching Flies) and ſpend their Life in a ſort of laborious Idleneſs; I mean, in a buſy purſuit of impertinent things; like Children, who ſeem very buſy all the day long, and yet appear at night to have done nothing.

On the contrary, it is remark'd to the *Glory* of *David*'s
Act. 13. 36. Memory, That his Life was a *ſtanding Service to his Generation.* He was of a *Noble publick Spirit*, and ſpent his Sweat and Blood in the Defence and Advancement of his *Country* both in Church and State. And this renders his Memory bleſſed to this Day, and will do ſo to the end of the World. A noble and active *Genius* exerting it ſelf in contriving and doing Things for the *Publick Intereſt*, is a *Divine Bleſſing* to the Nation and Age wherein it appears. Such a *Worthy Perſon* is like the Sun in the Firmament, which gives Life and Chearfulneſs where-

ever

ever it ariſes. Or rather, like the *Lord Jeſus Chriſt* (the *Sun of Righteouſneſs*, from whom all ſuch *Divine Spirits* derive their Glory) whoſe Character it was, *That he went about doing good.*

And whereas the Vice of *Idleneſs* in the Text is particularly charged upon the *Daughters of Sodom and Iſrael*; this, alas! brings to our remembrance our national and unſpeakable Loſs in the deceaſe of that *moſt induſtrious and pious Princeſs* who lately held the Scepter of theſe Kingdoms, and endeavoured to purge all the *Daughters* of her Land from the Sin and Reproach of *Idleneſs*, by giving them a moſt admirable Example of indefatigable Diligence. O! may ſuch an *Example* ever obtain a general Imitation: that we may be exempted from the Sin imputed, and the Danger threatned in the Text to *Jeruſalem, and her idle Daughters.*

For indeed where *Idleneſs* prevails, it nurſes Wantonneſs, Baſeneſs, and Effeminacy, and almoſt every Vice. The *Sluggard's* Heart is like his Field (*Prov.* 24.21.) *overgrown with Brambles and Weeds*, and is unfit to produce any good Fruit. Slothfulneſs ever dulls, enervates, and infatuates the Perſon that indulges it, till at laſt it brings him to Rags and Ruin. It brought *Sodom and Jeruſalem* in the Text, to utter deſtruction; for *abundance of Idleneſs was in them, and in their Daughters:* and whether it be not ſo with us and ours will be of concernment to us to inquire; and indeed it will in a great meaſure appear from that which falls under our conſideration in the next *Particular*, which is the laſt note of Deſtruction mentioned in the Text, namely,

IV. An *unmerciful Neglect of the Poor:* which is expreſt thus, *Neither did ſhe* (i. e. Sodom) *ſtrengthen the hands of the Poor and Needy.*

In which Expreſſion theſe three Things are laid to their Charge.

1. They did not help the Poor to their Right in matters of Equity and Judgment.
2. They neglected to provide Subſiſtence for their impotent Poor.
3. They did not provide Employment for ſuch as were able to labour. In all theſe ſenſes, *the hands of the Poor* were weaken'd and enfeebled.

Firſt, They did not help the *Poor* to their Right in matters of Equity and Judgment. The *Poor Man's Cauſe* was neglected and deſpiſed, and could not have a fair Hearing and a juſt Determination. In this Reſpect, the *Magiſtrate* ought to ſtrengthen the *poor Man's hand*, that he may be able to recover his juſt Wages where it is denied him, and may have Right done him in all Cauſes depending before the *Bench of Juſtice*.

The *Prophet Iſaiah* reproves this Partiality and Injuſtice in the *Judges of Iſrael* with great ſeverity, and tells them plainly (as my Text does) that they were become like
Iſa. 1. 10. *Sodom* in this iniquity: *Hear the word of the Lord, ye Rulers of* Sodom, *ſeek ye Judgment, relieve the Oppreſſed, judg the Fatherleſs, plead for the Widow.* And he lamenteth,
Ver. 23. That the *faithful City was become an Harlot: it was full of Judgment, Righteouſneſs lodged in it, but now Murderers: Every one loveth Gifts, and followeth after Rewards*, &c.

When the Streams of Juſtice are thus perverted, ſo that the *loud Cries of the Oppreſſed* aſcend up to Heaven againſt any *City* or *Nation*, it is in great Danger. For it is ſaid, *if thou afflict the Widow and Fatherleſs in any wiſe; and they cry at all unto me, I will ſurely hear their cry: And*

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my Wrath ſhall wax hot, and I will kill you with the Sword; and your Wives ſhall be Widows, and your Children Fatherleſs. Exod. 22. 23, 24.

Secondly, A Neglect to provide for the impotent *Poor*; ſuch as are by Sickneſs, Age, or calamitous Providences, rendered unable to get their living. Theſe are the feeble parts of the Body, which (as the Apoſtle ſays) muſt be *ſupported by the more ſtrong*, in love and pity to the whole, or they will be guilty of a moſt unnatural Cruelty. It is *hiding our ſelves from our own Fleſh* (as the Prophet terms it) when we turn away from a moving Object of *Charity*. Rom. 15. 1. Iſa. 58. 7.

And that which enforces this Duty yet more upon Chriſtians, is, That our *Bleſſed Saviour* has eſpouſed the Poor as his *Relations* and *Repreſentatives* (where they are humble and pious) and reſents all Neglect of ſuch, as a perſonal Affront to himſelf, *Mat.* 25. 45. And therefore we muſt become *Infidels* to the Promiſes and Threatnings of his Book, before we can harden our Hearts againſt proper Objects of *Charity*.

And truly our *State* is inferiour to few, if any, in ample Contributions towards the ſubſiſtence of our *Poor*. But with ſubmiſſion, there may perhaps be ſome improvements in the management of our *publick Charity*: the conſideration of which falls in with the laſt way of *ſtrengthning the hands of the Poor*; which is,

Thirdly, By *providing ſutable Employments for them*, that we may ſhun two of the deſtructive Vices of *Sodom* at once, to wit, *Idleneſs*, and *Unmercifulneſs*.

It is moſt certain, that a full and conſtant Employment of our *Poor* would remove multitudes of Evils at once from us, and open an Ocean of publick Benefits and Divine

Divine Bleſſings. For, alas! Idleneſs tends to *ſtrengthen the hands of our Poor* in Wickedneſs, and in all manner of Vice: Many Hands in this Kingdom are at this day employ'd in pilfering and picking of Pockets, which by honeſt Labour would be ty'd up from this and other Enormities.

It is extremely moving to any good Mind to conſider, That many *Thouſands* of young and able People among us (whoſe diligent Labours would be of great Uſe and Advantage to the *Publick Good*, and might by that method of getting their Living be brought to live ſoberly, peaceably, and honeſtly) do now turn Vagrants, Rebels, and Vagabonds: yea, they ſteal, and lie, and commit Whoredom, and ſell their Souls to get a temporal Subſiſtence. A diſmal Thought! enough to move a Heart of Marble, if duly conſidered. And it is enough, methinks, to gain an univerſal Endeavour to redreſs this, if it be but obſerved, That in all probability, the Remedy of this *grand Evil* (eſpecially in this *City*) will be with leſs Charge and Trouble than the toleration of the Diſtemper.

For indeed, the more this grows upon us, the more we ſhall of neceſſity be impoveriſh'd, as well by the natural Conſequence of it, as by the high Diſpleaſure of God againſt it. And truly, it becomes thoſe who find themſelves diſappointed and diminiſh'd in their *Trade* of late, to conſider whether this has not been one provoking Cauſe of it.

We behold Crowds of *Beggars* filling almoſt every Door, and diſturbing all Buſineſs and Converſation by their importunate Clamours. Our Ears are almoſt deafen'd both in the *Streets* and in the *Fields* with the loud Cries of ſuch as beg for Relief: and the common Excuſe for this idle way of Life, is, their want of Work

Work to ſet their Hands to. And from this ſtock of People bred up in Idleneſs, the *High-ways* come to be infeſted with *Robbers*, and our Houſes and Lives are endanger'd in the Night, when we ſhould reſt upon our Beds. And tho the *Priſons* are fill'd with them, and Thouſands of them are executed for their Outrages, (to the eternal Ruin of their Souls, as well as to their being cut off in the prime of their Days) yet the Diſtemper grows upon us, and is like ſo to do, till ſufficient *Work-Houſes* and *ſtocks of Work* be provided for their conſtant *Employment*; which all good People will moſt readily accept, and be thankful for it: And as for others, they muſt be driven to honeſt Labour by the compulſive Power of wholeſome Laws.

And without ſome ſuch Proviſion, it is not very eaſy to anſwer their Complaint of ſeverity againſt the *Laws* of our Land, which condemn ſo many *Thouſands* to Death for pilfering a few Pence, and yet provide no Means for them to get a Peny by honeſt Employment, when it may be done with publick Advantage.

It is a gracious Promiſe of God, that *there ſhall always be poor People among us.* And tho the unthinking and ſtingy Churl will not give God thanks for this Promiſe, yet the prudent and ſerious Perſon will; not only (tho chiefly) as it is a ſtanding way of conveying his Treaſures into the *Bank of Heaven*, but alſo as the uſe of the poor Man's Labours is the direct means of increaſing his *Wealth* upon Earth. Deut. 15. 11.

And truly, the laborious poor Man is one of the moſt infallible objects of *Charity* that we can chooſe, when his ability to labour fails him: Others may be *Hypocrites* in their Profeſſion, but he can be none in his. But alas! as the Caſe now ſtands, any Perſon that is diſpoſed to *Charity* ſcarce knows where to chooſe proper objects for it.

it. How can he distinguish betwixt the *real Indigents* and the *idle Vagrants*, among the Crowds which solicit his Alms? When we pass thorow the Fields, or sit in our Houses, and are entreated for an *Alms* by all the Asseverations of *Necessity and Want* that a long and earnest Harangue can express: what divided sentiments will arise upon this in the Breast of a pious and prudent Person? It is difficult to believe, and yet as hard to disbelieve the piteous Narrative of the Petitioner. It is scarcely *Christian* to deny, and yet it is scarcely *prudent* to give.

In such cases indeed our *Charity* will incline us to venture the Hazard of a small Alms, rather than run the Risque of denying a poor *Member of Christ*. And in many Cases it is almost necessary to give something meerly to stop Clamour, and purchase Ease from intolerable noise and importunity: yea, sometimes, to prevent the wrath and ill language which attends a denial.

Thus is the clear Current of *Christian Charity* obscured and diverted, and many are scarcely free Agents in what they give. And alas! all this while, there remain many poor Families who would be willing to work, tho they are ashamed to beg: and some of these have concealed their Miseries within their private Walls; and have chosen rather to perish in silence, than to open their Poverty, where their publick shame and reproach would be more certain than their constant Relief. O blessed God! for thy Son's sake lay not these things to our charge.

Thus have I laid before you the black Catalogue of *Sodom*'s *Sins*, which when they grew up also to a ripeness in *Jerusalem*, proved as fatal to the latter as to the former. And I must leave it to every one's Conscience to judg, whether this *City* and *Nation* be not in great Dan-

Danger at this day from the ſame Cauſes. And let me entreat you, that you would not dull the Edg of this Conviction by the conceit of a *ſubmitting Enemy*, and a *blooming Proſperity* conſequent to it: But remember the *Eternal Righteouſneſs* of the *Governour of the World*, which will keep its courſe, tho that of Men does not; and that he has thouſands of ways to bring a profligate People to *Miſery* and *Deſolation*.

And now, ſince we have peruſed the Liſt of *Sodom*'s *Sins*: if any one inquires after the Sin of *Uncleanneſs*, which certainly made a great Cry among the reſt; we find it in the next verſe, *and they committed Abomination*. And if we look for it in the Text, we ſhall find it in the loins of thoſe two Parents of Uncleanneſs, *Luxury* and *Idleneſs*, which where-ever they are conjoin'd, do uſually produce the naſty iſſue of *beſtial Uncleanneſs*: As, alas! they have done amongſt us to a very dreadful (I had almoſt ſaid, to a deſperate) Degree. So that if the Sin of *Uncleanneſs* be but obſcurely repreſented in the Text, it was notoriouſly viſible in *Sodom*'s *Streets*, and alas! in ours too; with this ſhameful difference on our part, that whereas the *Sodomites* deferr'd the proſecution of their Luſts till the Evening, hoping to vail their unſeemly Sin by the black Curtains of the Night; with us, alas! it is proſecuted in the *Noon-day*, and in the *thickeſt Concourſe*. I pray God excite our *Magiſtrates* to take the puniſhment of theſe things into their Hands, *for it is an Iniquity to be puniſh'd by the Judges*, or elſe to be ſure God will: and then, wo, wo unto us. Job 31. 11.

This leads me to apply what has been ſaid. And here, in the firſt place;

I. I humbly preſs the conſideration of theſe things upon thoſe *Publick* and *Honourable Perſons*, before whom I ſpeak, and muſt in Conſcience ſpeak freely. Is it not a moving Conſideration to behold the very Cauſes of *Sodom*'s Deſtruction, and *Jeruſalem*'s Deſolation, growing upon us; and come to a very dreadful Criſis? This may well alarm every Member of our Community, but it does more eſpecially concern ſuch as by their high ſtation repreſent the *Head* of this *Publick Body*; which is particularly empower'd and capacitated to provide for the ſafety of the reſt of the *Members*.

It was a very paſſionate Expoſtulation of the *Diſciples* Mar. 4.38. with their ſleeping Maſter, *Careſt thou not that we periſh?* We muſt needs ſay, it was an unfit and indecent Queſtion to be put to the vigilant and tender *Saviour* of Men. But, methinks, the Extremities of our preſent Caſe may apologize for ſuch a rowzing Interrogatory to thoſe Perſons amongſt us who ſeem rock'd to ſleep by *carnal Luſts* and *private Intereſts*, ſo as to manifeſt no juſt Concern for the *Publick Good*.

Magiſtrates have ſome peculiar Features of God's Image impreſt upon them above others, even thoſe of his *Power* and *Authority:* and upon this account they are called *Gods* in Scripture, as being ordained of God to *puniſh evil doers* in his ſtead, and to ſupport *ſuch as do well*. But the *Rulers of Sodom* had put off this Character, and ſo had the ſupine *Rulers of Iſrael*; which ſo grieved and mov'd the Prophet *Iſaiah*, that the firſt Chapter of his Prophecy abounds with the ſharpeſt Invectives againſt them. And indeed, it is very deplorable to conſider, from what a Divine Seat of *Honour* and *Dignity* a corrupt Magiſtrate deſcends when he acts contrary to his Poſt, or does nothing worthy

worthy of it. It is ſomewhat like the Fall of the *Apoſtate Angels*, from being *God's Miniſters*, to be his *Enemies*.

And truly, every private Perſon will alſo fall under the ſame Condemnation who does not ſincerely ſet himſelf (according to his Place and Capacity) againſt the violent Torrent of abounding Sin: Which leads me to a Second Inference.

II. Let all ſuch as pretend to *Chriſtianity*, yea, or to Sobriety and *good Morals*, ſet themſelves againſt the devouring Plagues of our Nation, the common Sins thereof. If ever we had need to give our publick Vote for the *Reformation* of corrupt Manners, ſurely we have at this Day. And bleſſed be God who hath kindled any Deſires of it in any Perſons among us.

It is a moſt admirable work of God, and what opens the faireſt Proſpect to us of any that I know, That any *young Perſons* among us lament and eſcape the Pollutions of this degenerate Age, and look Heaven-wards. The good God increaſe their Number, and the Number of their Friends and Favourers. *The Lambs are the hope of the Flock; if they rot, the Flock will ſoon come to nothing.* And if the next Generation degenerates as dreadfully as this has done, we ſhall be as corrupt as *Sodom* it ſelf, and as ſurely brought to deſolation.

Some may perhaps ſay, that all this is true, but how ſhall we help it? How ſhall we? Why the lively ſenſe of Danger ſcarce ever wants means or ſeaſons, or ſtrength to avoid it. Any one acts above his uſual ſtrength, when it is to ſave his Life, and to prevent Deſtruction. If we would once ſet our

ſelves heartily to ſutable Remedies, the work were more than half done: As the *Reformation of Ninive*, and its *Reſcue* from Deſtruction does abundantly teſtify.

Truly, Sirs, the World only ſtands by *Divine Providence* in hope of its *Reformation*; for *all Fleſh ſeems to be corrupted before God*, a ſmall Remnant only excepted. And if the Sins of any People are indeed remedileſs, their Ruin will be ſo too: as in the Caſe of *Judah* before us, of which it is ſaid, that *they ſinn'd till there was no remedy*. And if the caſe be come to this, I have only one Inference more to add.

2 Chron. 36. 16.

III. And Laſtly. How happy is their Caſe, who in times of general Depravity, are exempted from the common Corruption! who (like the *Family of Lot* in *Sodom*) are ſo far from being partakers in the vulgar Sins, that *they are grieved in their Spirits* at the Abomination which they *ſee* and *hear* from day to day. Such Perſons muſt expect to be the Scoff and By-word of the wicked People among whom they live, who ill repay their Pity and Concern for them. It was juſt ſo with *Lot* in *Sodom*: If he entreats them to refrain their pernicious Exorbitances, they bitterly revile and rail upon him. They call him a *buſy preſuming Fellow*, who would be medling with what he had nothing to do, and would feign be as magiſterial as *a Judg* amongſt them, *Gen.* 19. 9.

Thus *Lot* was *Sodom*'s Laughter, whilſt *Sodom* was *Lot*'s Grief. But the End proves who acted the wiſeſt part. For then *Lot* and his pious Family were miraculouſly preſerved, when *Sodom* and its mocking Crew

Crew were miraculouſly deſtroyed. *Lot* had the glorious Angels of Heaven ſent to him for his Safeguard, when *Sodom* had *Fire and Brimſtone* (the Emblems of Hell) pour'd down upon them for their Deſtruction. Good and bad Men live by contrary Rules and Principles now, and in their Death they will be divided; *The one will be taken, and the other left.* They take different Courſes, and muſt come to different Ends. Lazarus *is for ever comforted, and* Dives *for ever tormented.* *Lot* was ſaved both from the Flames of *Sodom* and thoſe of Hell, thro God's Marvelous Mercy: and *Sodom* periſhed by an Everlaſting Deſtruction. For St. *Jude* tells us, That as they were deſtroyed by dreadful Flames upon Earth, ſo they *now ſuffer the Vengeance of Eternal Fire.* Jude 7.

O! what greater Argument can I produce to convert Sinners, or to confirm Converts? I requeſt each of theſe to look to the End to which they are poſting.

Be of good courage, ye that ſerve the Living God, for your Work will ſpeedily and infinitly be rewarded. Ye may perhaps be mockt and deſpiſed of Men, as your *bleſſed Lord* himſelf was: But ye will be commended and crowned of God at the laſt. And in truth, Sirs, the Favour of God is better than all the noiſy Fame and fading Enjoyments of this preſent World. I know nothing that deſerves the name of *Riches*, *Honour* or *Happineſs*, ſo much as the raiſing and refining of our Faculties and Capacities by *Divine Wiſdom and Vertue.* And truly this alone is all to us: For, all the Pleaſures of the Fleſh are Folly and Mockery, if compared with the noble Joy of a regenerate Soul delighting in God, its proper, adequate, and felicitating Object; by communion with whom,

whom, it anticipates the *Powers of the World to come*, and *rejoiceth with Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory.*

But as for ſuch, who will neither by the Mercies nor Judgments of God be reclaimed from Senſuality and ſordid Luſts: They ſink firſt into the vileneſs of Beaſts, and then into the miſery of Devils. Their temporary Vanity leads them moſt aſſuredly to eternal Vexation. They may perhaps have a little *Sunſhine* in the Morning, as *Sodom* it ſelf had; but there is a dreadful Shower of *firy Indignation* coming down from God to *conſume his Adverſaries.* For however they delude themſelves now, they will find at laſt, that *it ſhall be more tolerable for* Sodom *and* Gomorrah *in the day of Judgment than for them*, except they repent.

Conſider what has been ſaid; and the Lord give you Underſtanding in all things. Amen.

FINIS.